

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **1, PART I**

LOS ANGELES TIMES
3 July 1985

Reagan and Gorbachev to Meet in Fall

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WASHINGTON—President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev have agreed to meet for the first time in Geneva in November, Reagan Administration officials said Tuesday.

What one Soviet expert characterized as "a minuet" played out over months of low-key negotiations is culminating in an official announcement that the two leaders will get together in the Swiss city Nov. 19 and 20 in a "get-acquainted" summit meeting.

Word of the summit followed the surprise announcement in Moscow that Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko had been elevated to the post of president of the Soviet Union, a move that enabled Gorbachev to name Eduard A. Shevardnadze, Communist Party chief in the Republic of Georgia, as the new foreign minister.

Reagan himself gave an informal confirmation Tuesday that the meeting will take place when he nodded in response to a question about it after a ceremony welcoming home 30 of the TWA hijack victims. And Secretary of State George P. Shultz scheduled a news conference for today.

"I don't see it as a 'big expectation' thing," said one Administration official. But he held out the possibility that it might lead to progress in improving the poor state of U.S.-Soviet relations when representatives of the two superpowers meet subsequently. Nevertheless, he cautioned, the "track record" of summits in third countries "has not been all that great."

The meeting in Geneva would follow several sessions at which Reagan Administration officials will have opportunities to assess Soviet leaders in new roles.

Shultz is likely to confer with new Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze at a conference July 30-Aug. 1 in Helsinki, Finland,

marking the 10th anniversary of the 35-nation accords intended to ease East-West tensions.

In addition, Reagan, who met outgoing Foreign Minister Gromyko for the first time in his presidency last autumn, may confer with him for a second time if Gromyko visits the United Nations in September or October in his new capacity as Soviet president.

A senior State Department official, speaking on condition that he not be identified, said the summit meeting's agenda has not yet been worked out but that it could be "self-creating"—evolving as the two leaders talk. He suggested that agreements on new consulates and airline landing rights could be reached.

Another department official, saying, "We won't have a lot of important, pre-negotiated stuff for them to sign," listed U.S.-Soviet trade and peaceful nuclear cooperation as areas of possible agreement.

Other likely discussion topics on Reagan's agenda include the apparently stalemated arms control talks under way in Geneva, the Soviet military role in Afghanistan, support by Moscow for the leftist regime in Nicaragua and anti-government rebels in El Salvador and efforts to control terrorism.

Delivered Late Monday

The Soviet Union's agreement to join Reagan in a summit meeting was delivered to the State Department late Monday by the Soviet Embassy in Washington, officials said.

In comments holding out the prospect for improved relations with the Soviet Union, State Department spokesman Bernard Kalb said: "We believe we can and should resolve outstanding problems in all areas of the agenda before us. The United States is always ready to make its contribution in this regard."

Reagan had invited Gorbachev to the United States, but the chances for a meeting in this country were dashed when the new Soviet leader decided not to attend the autumn meeting of the U.N. General Assembly.

The President has said in the past that he believes it is the turn of the Soviet leader to visit the United States. Although Jimmy Carter and

Leonid I. Brezhnev met in Vienna in 1979 during the last superpower summit conference, the two previous summits took place in the Soviet Union.

But Dmitri Simes, a Soviet expert at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, said Gorbachev "would rather not compete with the Great Communicator on his own ground" in the United States.

Simes said the Soviet leader prefers a neutral site in Europe because "he is playing for the hearts and minds of the Europeans," whose support could be helpful in improving the lagging Soviet economy.

On the part of the Soviets, a meeting will provide an opportunity to probe Reagan's plans for a space-based missile defense program, known informally as "Star Wars," said Harry Gelman, a senior staff member of the Rand Corp. in Santa Monica and a former CIA expert on the Soviet Union.

However, he said, the Soviets have "been trying to create the impression Mr. Reagan is stonewalling" at the Geneva arms control talks.

"By agreeing to a bilateral meeting, they could undermine their campaign," Gelman said.

For Reagan, he added, a Gorbachev meeting "enhances his political leverage vis-a-vis Congress and demonstrates to Europe that despite the lack of progress in Geneva, the United States wants to reduce tensions."